

I-80 Lakes Southwest District

2009 Survey Summary



Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

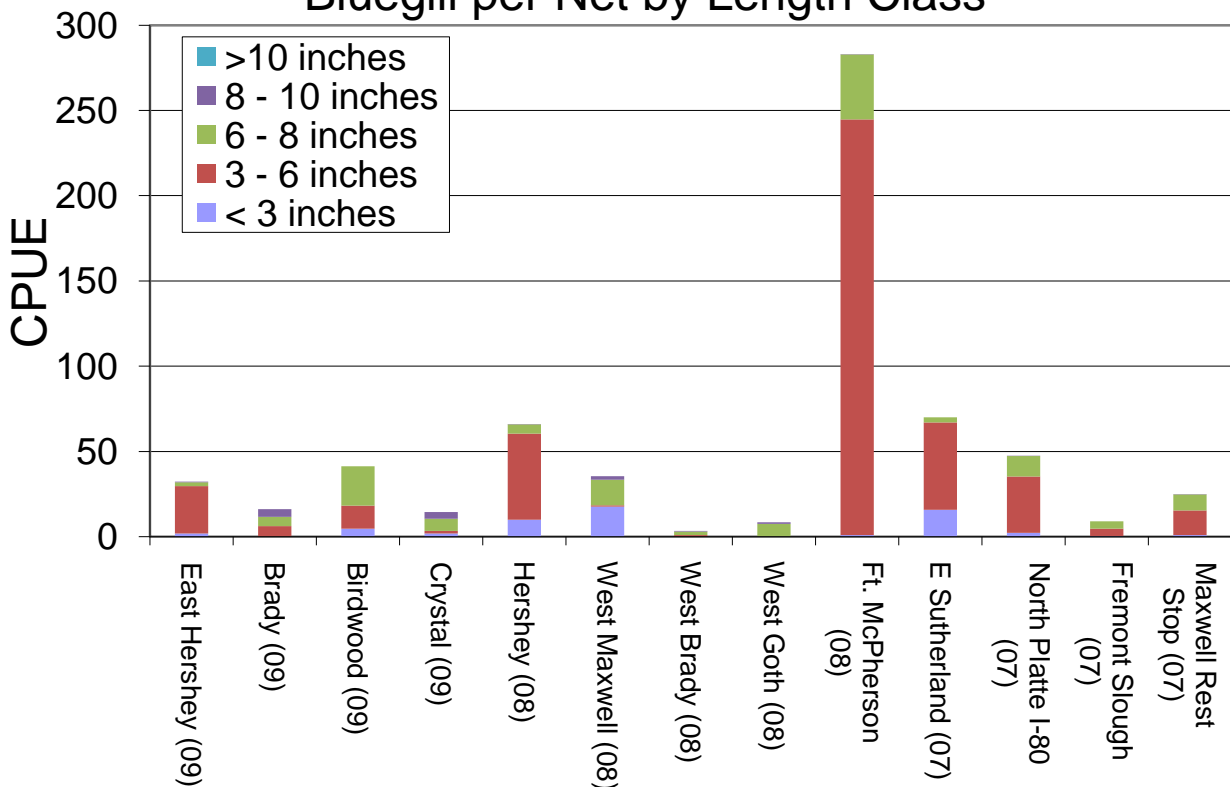
Caleb Huber, Fisheries Biologist

Bluegill

Bluegill are present in all of the I-80 lakes across the Southwest District. They serve as the primary prey item for larger predatory species. Bluegill are also a favorite for anglers especially though the ice. Bluegill are most easily caught off of spawning beds during the warmer months. Bluegill tend to school during the winter and favor deeper water or submerged cover. Statewide regulations for bluegill are; no length limit, 30 panfish in combination daily bag, 60 panfish possession limit. **Note: Beginning 2010 High Use Regulations will be implemented on Birdwood and North Platte I-80 lakes.**



Bluegill per Net by Length Class

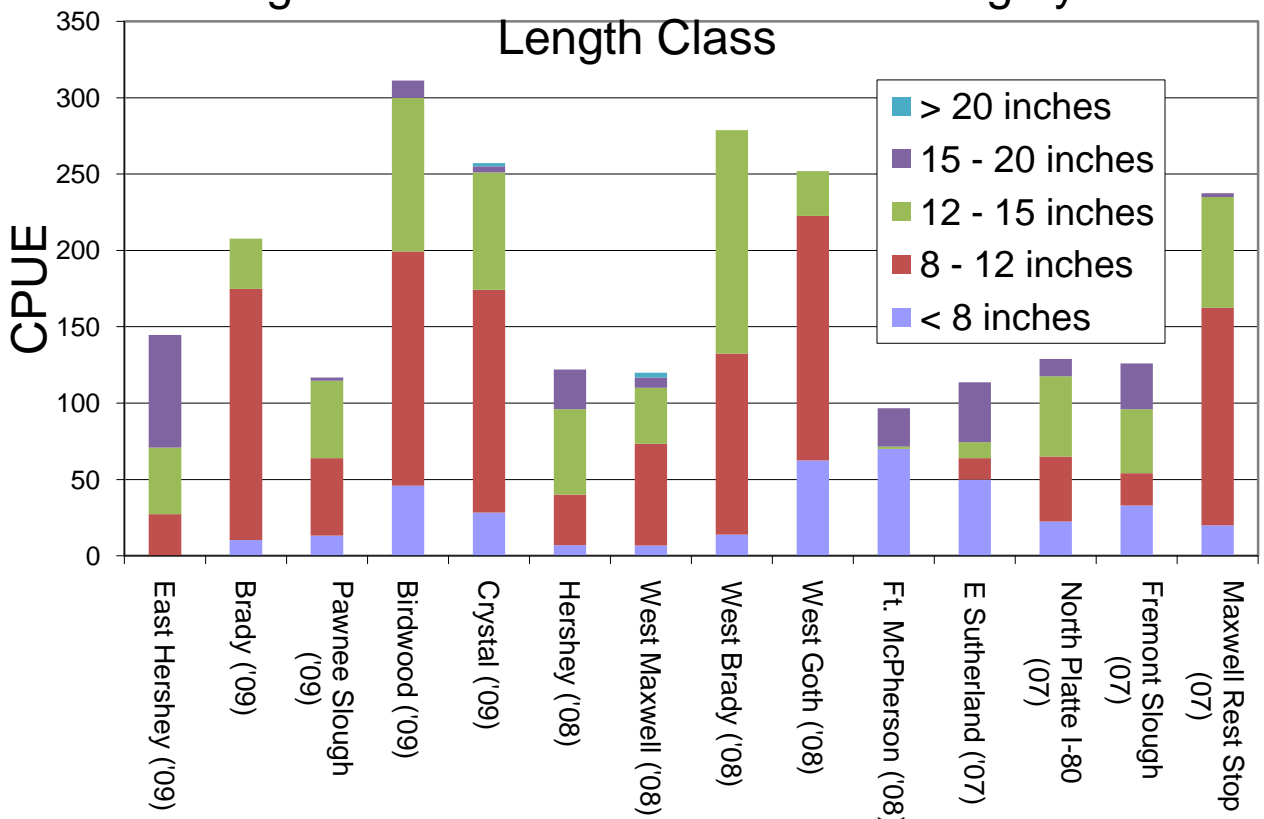


Largemouth Bass

Largemouth bass are present in all of the I-80 lakes across the Southwest District. However, there are other predatory species available at various interstate lakes. Largemouth bass are favored by anglers because of their aggressive nature and hard-fighting attitude. Largemouth bass can be caught on a myriad of live and artificial baits that mimic baitfish or crawfish. Largemouth can also be tempted to bite on artificials that appeal to their aggressive nature or invade their territory. Statewide regulations for largemouth bass in inland waters are; 15-inch minimum length limit, 4 fish daily bag (no more than 1 \geq 21 inches), and 8 fish possession. **Note: Beginning 2010 High Use Regulations will be implemented on Birdwood and North Platte I-80 lakes.**



Largemouth Per Hour of Electrofishing by Length Class





Other Fish

Channel Catfish

Channel catfish are stocked regularly into most of the I-80 lakes. These fish are grown to 10 inches before stocking to limit predation by largemouth bass. Catfish are stocked every other year to maintain fishable populations for anglers. Beginning in 2010 high use regulations will be enforced on North Platte I 80 and Birdwood lakes.

Redear Sunfish

Redear sunfish are found in several of the I-80 lakes such as East Hershey, Crystal, West Brady, Fort McPherson, and West Gothenberg. Redear favor clear water and underwater vegetation and can grow to 12 inches or greater. Redear tend to be less aggressive and have a different diet than bluegill which can make redear harder to catch especially through the ice.

Rock Bass

Rock bass are a unique species that are rare throughout most of the state, but there are some interstate lakes with fishable populations. Rock bass are located in Hershey, East Sutherland, and East Hershey.

Rainbow Trout

Rainbow trout are stocked into Birdwood Lake each year to provide an unique winter fishery. Trout are stocked twice each year for a total of 8000 fish annually. There is no length limit and the bag limit is 8 fish daily with a possession limit of 8 fish



Examples of invasive vegetation and chemical control

Vegetation Control and Angler Access

Interstate lakes are open year-round for fishing and many of them are surrounded by wildlife areas that can provide various hunting and wildlife-viewing opportunities. Most lakes also have primitive boat ramps that are suitable for smaller boats. It is important to note that no combustion engines are allowed on interstate lakes. There are several small waters that are classified as “family friendly” in the 2010 Fishing Guide. These areas have good access and contain decent fish populations and thus would be a good places to start for those who are new to fishing or who are looking for a place to take the whole family.

Recently, Game and Parks biologists have begun applying herbicide to some lakes in order to improve shoreline access and control invasive species such as *Phragmites spp.* and purple loosestrife. Treatment can take several years due to plant height and stand density. So far we have achieved good results and will continue herbicide treatments as necessary. Above are some pictures from past treatments to illustrate the amount of vegetation and the results of chemical controls. **Its is also important to remind anglers that there is no trash pickup at the areas so please clean up after yourselves.**



Brushing Projects

Several of the interstate lakes in the Southwest District have been enhanced with cedar tree brush piles to improve habitat and concentrate fish for anglers. Trees are usually cut from surrounding wildlife management areas and positioned on the ice. These trees are weighted and allowed to melt and sink through the ice. The brush piles are especially attractive to panfish during the summer and winter months.

Hershey, West Maxwell, West Gothenberg, Crystal, Brady, West Brady, and Fort Mcpherson all have at least some brush piles and the list continues to grow each year.

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